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Killing Leads CIA Probe to Offer to Guard Witnesses

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WASHINGTON—The Senate committee investigating the Central Intelligence Agency has offered to protect witnesses because of the murder of Chicago gangster Momo Salvatore (Sam) Giancana.

Sen. Frank Church (D-Ida.), chairman of the Select Committee on Intelligence Activities, told reporters of the offer as the panel prepared to hear testimony today from Johnny Rosselli, a Los Angeles associate of Giancana.

It is understood that Rosselli will testify freely about allegations that he helped plan or direct—under CIA auspices—about six attempts on the life of Cuban Premier Fidel Castro in the early 1960s.

Church said that no witnesses had requested protection but that it was available "to anyone who feels he would need it."

As to whether the committee would provide round-the-clock protection, he said, "Inasmuch as no one has accepted the offer so far, we have yet to work out the details."

Rosselli, who will appear in closed session, reportedly has decided to answer all questions immediately rather than seek a limited grant of immunity from prosecution for his testimony. An immunity request could delay Rosselli's testimony for two weeks or more.

Former Howard Hughes aide Robert A. Maheu, who allegedly helped the CIA deal with Giancana and Rosselli, sought immunity earlier this month and refused to answer the committee's questions. His immunity grant may be approved by a federal judge this week.

In return for Rosselli's cooperation, a committee source said, the panel may recommend that the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service halt efforts to deport him. Rosselli was convicted in 1971 in the Friars Club card-cheating case in Los Angeles.

Giancana was shot to death in the basement of his Oak Park, Ill., home Thursday night. Committee aides who were planning to interview Giancana said there was no evidence to link his slaying to the CIA investigation.

Church said the panel's investigation of foreign assassinations had been delayed because the White House had not provided records of certain National Security Council meetings in the early 1960s.

"I don't know the reasons," Church said. "I am not charging bad faith on the part of the White House."

However, because the records have not been received, the committee is postponing the appearance of former presidential aide McGeorge Bundy and possibly other Kennedy and Johnson administration officials, he said.

White House Press Secretary Ron Nessen said arrangements had been worked out to supply the committee with photocopies of raw data and documents gathered by the Rockefeller commission on CIA involvement in alleged foreign assassination plots.

Later, Nessen's deputy, John W. Hushen, said that the White House had "more than met the timetable" agreed to by its office of legal counsel for delivery of papers requested by the committee. He said a request received Wednesday for top-secret material bearing on assassination plots had been complied with Friday.

Church "is complaining about something publicly that he has not complained about in private," Hushen said. He called Church's comments "quite unexpected and quite unfortunate."

Roderick M. Hills, legal counsel to the President, said the White House still was reviewing records of National Security Council meetings. These will be lent to the committee under guard and will be returned to the White House each night for safe-keeping, Hills said.